

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE WILLIAM J. PERRY
REMARKS TO THE MEDIA AT RETIRED OFFICERS ASSOCIATION CONVENTION
SEATTLE, WA
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Secretary Perry: Let me apologize, first of all, for the awkward timing here. I wish you had been able to both talk with me and hear Secretary Lee speaking. We'll keep this short, though, so you can get back and hear her talk. I understand she's going to be available for some questions also.

I wanted to very briefly highlight a few points which I made in my talk which I think are perhaps the most important issues. The first is the importance, the top priority in our planning of the readiness of our military forces, and the key to the quality of the people to achieving that readiness. As I said in my talk, the primary challenge for the Defense Department is maintaining that quality, that readiness, in the face of the very substantial budget drawdowns we're going through now.

I also made the point that a critical aspect to achieving that is making more effective and more efficient use of our reserve forces. They have to be ready, in many ways, as our active forces are ready, and we have to be able to achieve a seamless interface between the reserves and the active component.

I pointed out to the group here that I saw a splendid example of reserves and active forces working together yesterday in the air mobility exercise, the Rodeo Exercise, out at McChord Air Force Base.

With those brief introductory remarks, let me throw it open for questions.

Q: Can you address the situation in Korea? Do you think with the agreement of the two Koreas to meet for the first time that the danger of a conflict

has been averted? Do you think the decline in tension has been achieved at any cost, or the perception that the U.S. may have backed down from some of its demands for North Korea to allow better monitoring of its nuclear capability?

A: We welcome the talks, both between North and South Korea and between the United States and North Korea. Both of them have the potential of resolving problems which we have on the Korean Peninsula. In particular, our problems with the nuclear weapon program that was being undertaken by North Korea.

We had underway, prior to the talks, prior to the agreement on the talks, proposals to impose sanctions of various sorts on North Korea, and plans to enhance our forces in South Korea. Both of those have been put on the shelf while we're going through the talks. If the talks are successful, we will not have to take them off the shelf again and that would be happy outcome for it. If the talks were to break down, then we would have to go back to considering those two actions again. But in the meantime, the North Koreans are freezing their nuclear weapon program. So, we feel that we can go ahead with talks, whether they're short or long talks, as long as that weapon program is being frozen. It's heading in a very, hopefully, constructive direction. So, I have nothing but positive reaction to the beginning of the talks. I'm hopeful that they're going to lead to something very positive.

Q: In the next line of base closures, there's talk that one major Army base will be closed, and there's speculation that might be Fort Carson or Fort Riley. Both of those communities have set up very strong community support groups. Is that how you see it, one of those? And if you could talk about how you're going to make the decisions on the other bases that are going to be closing.

A: The whole process of determining which bases are going to be proposed for closure, is that first of all, each of the services makes its own evaluation, its own determination. Both of those, of course, are Army bases, so the Army right now is going through a detailed analysis that compares the needs and the resources that they have to meet them.

I won't get a recommendation from the Army until next year some time-- January or February. Until I get that recommendation, I'm really not in a position to comment on which base is likely to be chosen.

The criteria that are being used for the bases that would be selected for closing involve, of course, the needs of the service as determined by the service, and the efficiency they might be able to gain by consolidation.

There are other factors as well. If you look at the bases in this area, for example, there are two great advantages of the bases in this area relative to any objective evaluation of needs. One of them is that we have Navy, Army, and Air

Force bases all consolidated together. Since any time we go into a contingency operation we're going in jointly, that's one advantage. Secondly, we're located here near a port of embarkation that would be appropriate to use if we had any contingency develop in the Pacific area. So the bases here are, I think, strategically placed relative to the contingencies which we can envision in the future.

Q: We understand that you folks now have a very full report on the downing of the two helicopters in Northern Iraq. Can you tell us if there will be any disciplinary action taken in connection with that accident, and your comment on the nature of that accident?

A: I can tell you, but not today yet. I just was briefed on that report the day before yesterday, have not had a chance to even read it myself in detail yet. I regret that the report was leaked to the press at this stage, because we cannot make intelligent comments on it until we've had a careful analysis of what it recommends and what kind of corrective actions might be necessary. I'm particularly sorry it was leaked to the press, because now the families of the victims will be getting fragmentary stories before we have a chance to be able to describe to them what sort of corrective actions we're taking. But we're certainly a week or two away from having done a careful enough analysis that we can describe the appropriate corrective actions.

Q: Would you expect to be taking any disciplinary or corrective actions...

A: Yes, there will certainly be corrective actions. Even on the time I've spent on the report so far, it was very clear that there were errors made--both procedurally and human errors. Of course we anticipated that, just on the nature of the accident itself.

I might say that I have, through the years, reviewed reports, accident reports, of major accidents many times, and the one thing they all have in common is that they require a combination of failures and errors to happen. To put it another way, there are always a combination of circumstances, any one of which had it not happened, would have prevented the accident. So it took an unfortunate confluence of many mistakes in order for this accident to have happened. So there certainly will be corrective actions taken. I cannot describe the nature of them at this time.

Q: While you're talking about drawdowns now, the appropriations bill approved by the House the day before yesterday was \$3.5 billion above the appropriation for FY94. The other question has to do with Mr. Carter's resignation. I was wondering if he had any recommendations or suggestions or general observations that are significant to you in the Base Closure Commission.

A: On the second point, we have put together a proposed list of people who will be candidates for the '95 Base Closing Commission. That's under review

right now. I would expect in the near future we will probably have some new names available for the '95 Base Closing Commission.

On the budget, we have changes proposed on a weekly basis when the budget is in process, and I try not to come to judgments about how I'm going to be able to implement those budgets until they're finally settled. We have some weeks ahead of us, maybe even some months ahead of us, before we really know what our final budget is going to be.

Q: Would you address the Haiti situation? Do you see that developing into more of a crisis with a need for imminent action? Especially with the recent flood of Haitian refugees. What is driving that? Is there a military solution that can be brought to bear there any time soon?

A: What seems to be driving the flood of refugees are, among other things, increased repression within Haiti. We are getting reports, at least, of increased repression within Haiti, so more people are leaving the country. In response to that we are increasing the capacity we have for processing boat people. I think we will be able to deal with the increases that way.

A more fundamental question, though is whether we should take any stronger action in the face of the repression that is taking place in Haiti. Our view up to this point has been that we should give the tougher sanctions we've imposed some time to work, to see if they can be effective in causing the military government there to leave. As of this time, that's still our course of action.

Thank you very much.

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